



COVID-19 (nCorona) Virus Outbreak Control and Prevention State Cell
Health & Family Welfare Department
Government of Kerala

Guidelines- Prevention & Management of COVID-19 in Prisons

Ref: 1. No 31/F2/2020/H&FWD dated 20th May 2020

2. Addendum - No 31/F2/2020/H&FWD 27th May 2020

3. DO No 72/Camp/DGP & CS dated 4th Sept 2020

World Health organisation has declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. Kerala has been taking all measures to contain the pandemic through strict surveillance and infection control measures. In order to ensure there is no spread of COVID19 in Jails the guidelines have been issued for screening of prisoners who are newly incarcerated or returning to jail after parole in the state as per the reference 1 and 2 cited above.

As per the reference cited 3 above DGP Prisons and Correctional services has informed that all 4298 prisoners have been tested and 683 were found to be positive and as per the respective health authorities guidance actions have been taken.

In the background of the testing conducted in all the jails and identification of the positive cases the following advisory is issued:

Following steps are the suggested to prevent and manage COVID-19 in prisons.

1. Symptom Surveillance

- Daily symptom surveillance among staff and inmates - [fever, cough, running nose, loose stools, loss of smell - Smell test shall be conducted using coffee powder and ask inmates to report any alteration in smell perception]
- Anybody with the above-mentioned symptoms shall be isolated and subjected to COVID-19 testing.
- This will help in early identification of people with potential for transmission.



2. Isolation of symptomatic people

- There shall be a system to ensure that anybody with symptoms of fever, cough, running nose, loose stools, loss of smell (even if very mild symptoms) shall be isolated to single rooms. If no single rooms are available, they shall be cohorted in a well-ventilated area maintaining 2-meter distance from everybody.
- Inmates or staff with symptoms shall not mingle with anybody.
- They shall always wear masks
- They shall undergo testing for COVID. Even if test is negative, they shall remain in isolation till symptom resolution.
- Staff accompanying the inmate for testing/ shifting shall use mask, gloves, face shield and avoid face to face interaction to best possible extent. Accompanying persons shall also practice frequent hand hygiene

3. Cohorting and Infrastructure planning

A proper infrastructure plan for each prison shall be made for (1) isolation of symptomatic, (2) quarantine of contacts, (3) reverse quarantine for vulnerable individuals and (4) facilities for healthy individuals.

Local public health authority will assist with determining how to cohort and how to keep residents separate within the cohorts.

Possible cohorts include:

1. All COVID-19 positive can be cohorted in large areas.
2. Symptomatic but not known to have COVID-19 shall be preferably in single rooms (if not possible, then in a well-ventilated area maintaining at least 2 meters distance from everybody)
3. Asymptomatic primary contacts (even though test negative) shall not mix with other people. They shall remain maintaining a distance of 2 meters

If Prison infrastructure cannot manage this cohorting and isolation, then separate CFLTC and Quarantine centres shall be considered.

Reverse Quarantine: People who are elderly, those with morbidity shall be protected. They shall not be allowed to mix with others. If positive inmates are too many inside a prison, then people with morbidity & elderly can be shifted to another place.



4. Measures regarding new admission to Prisons where outbreaks are ongoing

Any new inmate shall undergo Antigen based test before entering into prison. If possible, new admissions could be shifted to another prison where there are no outbreaks.

5. Working shifts for staff

- Staff working in a designated area (cohort caring positive cases) shall not serve in another area where negative people are staying.
- There can be three tier of staff – One for COVID area, one for Non COVID area and one reserve team.
- Staff may work continuously for 10 days and take 5 days off.
- On re-joining, COVID duty staff shall move to Reserve team. Reserve team shall move to routine work. Routine work staff shall move to COVID duty.
- Staff worked in COVID area can undergo antigen test on the day of joining duty.
- All Staff to maintain physical distancing and practise hand hygiene and use of masks throughout.

6. General Precautions

- Physical distancing shall be promoted to the best possible extent
- Frequent handwashing of all staff and inmates to be promoted at least every hour and after touching any frequently touched surfaces.
- Disinfection of frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted at least two times in a day using 0.5% sodium hypochlorite solution like table tops, taps, phone etc.
- Use of face Masks shall be promoted inside jail
- Crowd control to be ensured during lunch, washing and bathing etc. The timings could be reorganised to prevent crowding.
- Separate slots shall be arranged for all activities for vulnerable individuals including elderly and people with comorbidity to avoid mixing
- Inmates shall not mix in use of bathrooms also- eg separate bathrooms for symptomatic people, separate for people in reverse quarantine etc. shall be ensured.



- Bathroom shall be disinfected after each use with 0.5% sodium hypochlorite especially door knobs, taps, toilet commodes and frequently touched surfaces.
- Sharing of any materials like soap, razors etc to be avoided
- Avoidable group activities may be discontinued
- Visitors also need to be screened before permitting inside
- Education materials to be displayed, Frequent Awareness sessions shall be conducted

7. Testing in clusters

- 1) All symptomatic shall be tested.
- 2) For early identification of cases with vulnerabilities and for ensuring reverse quarantine - elderly, people with comorbidity, pregnancy and postnatal women shall be tested.

8. Transferring individuals with symptoms

While transferring individuals with symptoms, specially designed vehicles- double chambered jeep/bus etc. shall be used. People with symptoms shall not be mixed with people without symptoms

Outbreaks in congregated setting shall be contained with rigorous systems in place. These systems shall include rigorous implementation of all the points mentioned above.

A good monitoring system for ensuring these activities shall also be planned at the respective Jails.

Over and above this routine testing, during regular Sentinel surveillance samples shall be collected to see prevalence of the disease.


Principal Secretary